

730,000 TO JOIN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

GRAPHIC BY PHILLIP NSAMBA

The Uganda National Examinations Board (UNEB) yesterday revealed that out of the 807,313 candidates who sat for the Primary Leaving Examinations (PLE) in 2025 at 15,388 centres across the country, over 730,000 (90.4%) attained the required scores to join secondary school.

During the release of the exam results at State House, Nakasero in Kampala yesterday, the UNEB executive director, Dan Odongo, said cumulatively, 730,233 candidates had at least attained Division Four, making them fit for secondary school.

This means that the number of candidates who passed increased by 7,503, compared to the 722,730 in 2024. However, in terms of percentage of those who passed, there was a decline of 1.2%, from 91.8% to 90.4%.

"In terms of numbers, more candidates passed 2025 PLE compared to 2024. Most of the candidates scored between aggregate 11 and 30, pass levels, with the mode at aggregate 22," Odongo said.

He said more candidates 77,080 (9.5%) failed to attain any pass score and were ungraded (U), compared to 64,251 (8.2%) in 2024. The number of those who did not sit for their exams – despite registering – increased by 107, from 10,463 to 10,570 in 2025.

When it comes to overall performance, Odongo said, more candidates passed in Division One in 2025, as compared to 2024, with an increase of 7,689.

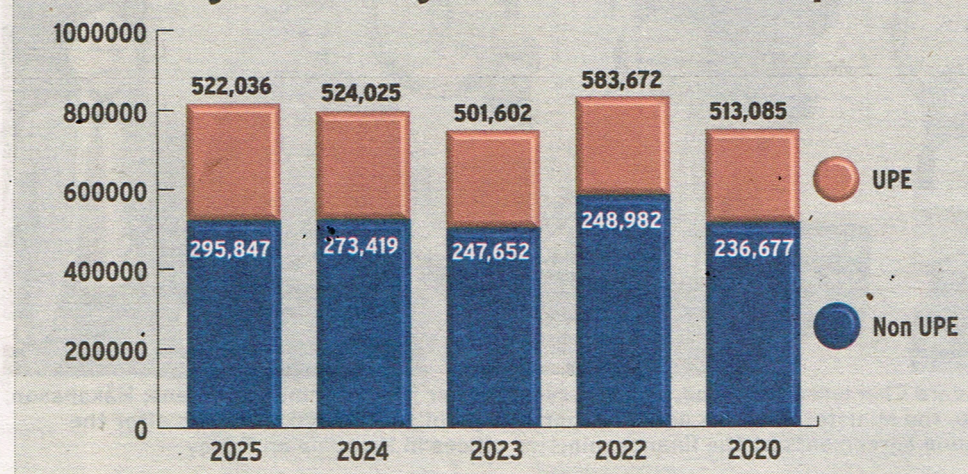
A total of 91,990 learners, representing 11.39%, passed in Division One compared to the 84,301 (10.7%) in 2024.

However, there was a decline in both the numbers and the percentage of those who passed in Division Two. The number decreased by 93,597 (1.5%) from 481,890 (50.5%) in 2024 to 388,293 (48.10%).

Those who passed in Division Three decreased from 165,284 to 165,226 in 2025. Those who passed in Division Four increased by 9,168, from 75,556 to 84,724.

The exams, conducted on November 3-4, 2025 – were

PLE registration figures for the last five years



themed, *Embracing Security and Holistic Assessment of Learners in a Dynamic Environment*.

"The same theme was used in 2024. The issues that informed the development in 2024 are still relevant to the examination process in 2025," Odongo said.

UPE CANDIDATES

The UNEB boss said about 63.8% (522,036) of the candidates who sat at the 11,525 centres were Universal Primary Education (UPE) beneficiaries, while 295,847 (36.2%) were from 3,863 non-UPE centres.

This means that the number of candidates increased by 20,439 (2.6%) over the previous year.

"Since the inception of UPE, hundreds of thousands of our children who would otherwise have not had education due to challenges of school fees, have been able to complete primary school.

"With the renewal of the mandate of the NRM Government by the people of Uganda, UPE shall continue to play its role in expanding access to basic education for all," the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Mrs Janet Museveni, said ahead of the results' release.

She said the commitment was to have all children attend primary education without paying any money.

GENDER

Regarding the gender front, the recent trend where more girls than boys completed

ABOUT EXAMINATION MALPRACTICE

The UNEB executive director, Dan Odongo, said examination malpractice has taken a shameless form where scouts and invigilators are bribed or threatened with physical harm by the school directors and headteachers to allow teachers to assist candidates directly in the examination rooms.

Odongo said this year, most of the cases withheld have been from the districts of Kisoro, Kampala, Mukono, Namutumba, Kassanda, Buyende and Kaliro, among others.

"I want to salute the leadership of Kyenjojo, Kabarole and Bundibugyo districts from where most cases were emanating, that a great change of heart appears to have taken place. Due to the stern action taken by the chief administrative officer of Kyenjojo in 2024, no case has been reported from the district," Odongo said.

primary education continued.

The UNEB data indicated that 52.4% (428,324) of the registered candidates were girls, while boys were 47.6% (389,469). Girls were 52.5% in 2024 while boys were 47.5%.

Regarding gender performance, Odongo said boys performed better than girls up to credit four. "Fewer boys are in the lower grades of seven and eight, and the fail grade of nine."

In terms of percentages, UNEB said, boys performed better than the girls and recorded a lower failure rate.

"The girls performed better in English. This appears to be the natural trend. In integrated science, boys have performed slightly better than girls. In social studies with religious education, boys have also performed slightly better than the girls," Odongo said.

More boys passed in Division One (48,220)



Dan Odongo

at 12.54% compared to girls (43,770) at 10.35%. However, in Division Two, girls were 201,655 (47.69%) and boys 186,638 (48.54%). A total of 87,773 girls passed in Division Three compared to 77,453 boys.

UNEB said candidates with special needs, who registered to sit for exams in 2025, were 3,636 compared to 3,328 in 2024. The figures represented an increase of 308 (9.3%) candidates.

"The number of SNE [special needs education] candidates continues to increase annually due to

the awareness that has been created in the schools by UNEB, and the education ministry. In this group, female candidates constitute 48.3% while 51.7% are males," Odongo said.

The SNE candidates included the physically handicapped, the dyslexics, plus those with hearing and visual impairment.

Out of these, 194 passed in Division One, 1,761 in Division Two, 776 in Division Three, 436 in Division Four, 431 ungraded and those who were absent are 35.

PRISON CANDIDATES

UNEB also reported that 61 candidates registered for their exams at the Uganda Government Upper Prison School, Luzira, compared to 71 in 2024.

Odongo said of the 61 candidates who registered, 58 of them sat, and four passed in Division One, 27 in Division Two, 13 in Division Three, five in Division Four, while nine were ungraded. The remaining three did not sit for the exams.

He said at Mbarara Main Prison Inmates Primary School, 40 candidates were registered, 39 of whom sat for the exams, while one was absent.

Of the 39, seven passed in Division One, 15 in Division Two, 10 in Division Three, five in Division Four, while two were ungraded.

PROFICIENCY

Odongo said an item response analysis – conducted on the scores of candidates in each of the four subjects – revealed that in terms of proficiency, candidates who exhibited higher ability averaged slightly above 15%, with high scores in English at 18.5% and mathematics (16.4%).

The majority of the candidates, according to UNEB, exhibited medium ability in all the four subjects, scoring above 65%.

Those who scored with lower ability averaged slightly above 16%, with the least score in social studies, with religious education

(16.3%).

"Higher ability candidates can remember or recall facts; show an understanding of those facts and are able to apply the facts or concepts in problem solving or in new situations," Odongo said.

According to UNEB, about 91.9% of the candidates passed English with at least pass eight, compared to 88.3% in 2024.

Those who passed social studies with religious education dropped from 91.9% to 86.7%. Despite more than 90% passing science, a drop was witnessed from 93.4% to 90.5% in 2025. The number of candidates who passed mathematics were 88.9% compared to 89.4% in the previous year.

Odongo said the examiners and curriculum specialists appreciated the quality of the papers administered.

The papers have recognised the paradigm shift to competency-based learning and the questions reflected this shift.

However, Odongo said the specialists expressed concern that the teachers, especially of social studies with religious education, appear not to be adjusting their teaching methods towards competence-based system.

"Candidates had difficulty in answering questions that required application of knowledge (particularly on their communities and the country)," Odongo said.

The UNEB chairperson, Prof. Celestino Obua, said the performance at Grade 1 pass level has improved compared to the 2024 exams.

"Overall, more candidates have qualified to proceed to join the next level/cycle of education than in 2024. I have no doubt that with the efforts the Government has put in expansion of access to post primary education, all 730,000 learners graded/ passed will find places in secondary and vocational schools," Obua said.

Filed by Nelson Kiva, Martin Kitubi and Simon Masaba